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THE CHINESE IN AUSTRALIA

1. GENERAL

After the cessation in 1840 of transportation to Australia, there was a shortage of labour; and attention was thereupon directed towards India as a source of supply. It is recorded that in 1839, 1,283 indentured Indian labourers were obtained by 111 pastoralists. A few years later employers in New South Wales brought down coolies from China, and it is known that by 18459, 270 Chinese had been introduced. No complete record was kept of the arrivals of Chinese during the next few years; but they must have been fairly numerous, since the Consul at Amoy wrote in 1852 that 2,666 Chinese had been taken thence to Australia, and of these 1,438 left in 1851. The drifting of these people to the mining fields aroused public protest, and further importation of Chinese labour was thereupon prohibited. Originally the number of Chinese arriving on their own account was small, only 28 having arrived in New South Wales during the three years ending 1849. This, however, was completely changed by the discovery of gold, which to a large extent was made known in Chinese seaport towns by shipping companies engaged in passenger traffic.

2. NEW SOUTH WALES

Attracted by the gold discoveries, the Chinese in the latter half of the fifties rapidly increased in New South Wales, and at the taking of the census in 1861, they numbered nearly 13,000. This influx resulted in the passing of a Chinese Immigration Restriction Act in November, 1861, on similar lines to the measure passed in Victoria six years earlier. By this Act a vessel was not allowed to bring more than one Chinese immigrant for every 10 tons register; a residence tax was imposed, and the right to naturalisation was withheld from natives of China. Later on, owing to the gradual decline in the number of Chinese immigrants, it was considered safe to remove all restrictions, and the Act of 1861 was repealed in 1867. The corresponding Acts in Victoria and South Australia had already been repealed several years earlier.

In 1880 and 1881, at the instigation of the Government of New South Wales, an Inter. colonial Conference was held in Melbourne to discuss the question of Chinese immigration. As a result of this conference, which terminated its sittings in Sydney in the following year, uniform restrictive legislation was introduced by all the colonies except Tasmania. The causes leading up to this conference were: (i) A considerable increase of Chinese in the north-east of Australia; (ii) growing opposition amongst the working classes to Chinese competition in the labour market; (iii) outbreaks of small-pox epidemics ascribed to Chinese immigrants, and cases of leprosy occurring amongst them; (iv) fear of a large influx of Chinese as a result of the measures adopted

by the United States of America to exclude them from the Pacific States.

The steps taken in 1881 resulted in a considerable reduction in the arrivals of Chinese. Nevertheless the restrictions were evaded to some extent, and large numbers landed in the Northern Territory, which was outside the barriers raised against them. In 1888, therefore, another Conference was held, and further restrictions were introduced. In New South Wales the passenger limitation was fixed at one immigrant to every 300 tons register.

The following table shows the numbers of Chinese in New South Wales at successive periods.

NEW SOUTH WALES - NUMBER OF CHINESE, 1856 to 1921.

YEAR	Full Blood			Half Caste		
	Males	Females	Persons	Males	Females	Persons
1856	1,800	6	1,806	a	a	a
1861	12,986	2	12,988	a	a	a
1871	7,203	12	7,220	a	a	a
1881	10,141	64	10,205	a	a	a
1891	13,048	109	13,157	442	425	807
1901	10,003	159	10,222	527	514	1,041
1911	7,942	284	8,226	561	571	1,132
1921	6,903	379	7,282	705	689	1,394

(a) Not available.

3. VICTORIA

The greatest influx of Chinese immigrants was, naturally, to Victoria, where the richest goldfields were located. In consequence of friction between the European and Chinese gold-miners, the Government in the beginning of 1853 appointed a Royal Commission to report on the matter, and the Commissioners recommended a restriction in the number of Chinese to be allowed entry. In June of the same year "An Act to make Provisions for certain Immigrants" was passed, and the number of Chinese passengers that could be brought to the colony in any vessel was thereunder limited to one for every 10 tons registered tonnage, while a capitation tax of £10 was imposed. In 1857 a Residence Tax of £1 per month later reduced to £4 a year was imposed on Chinese residents. In 1862 the Residence Tax was abolished, and the passenger limitations temporarily suspended. In 1865 the Act, which was considered to be no longer necessary, was repealed. After the Intercolonial Conference in 1880-81, restrictive measures were again adopted, and after the 1888 Conference, they were made more stringent. In the case of Victoria the passenger limitation was 'fixed at one Chinese passenger to every 500 tons of a ship's burthen.

The numbers of Chinese in Victoria at intervals from 1854 to 1921 are shown in the table below.

VICTORIA - NUMBER OF CHINESE, 1854 to 1921.

YEAR	Full-Blood			Half-Caste		
	Males	Females	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1854	2,341	...	2,341	a	a	a
1857	25,421	3	25,424	a	a	a
1861	24,724	8	24,732	a	a	a

1871	17,795	31	17,826	a	a	a
1881	11,795	164	11,950	74	95	169
1891	8,355	134	8,489	417	471	888
1901	6,236	111	6,347	504	498	1,002
1911	4,491	216	4,707	465	429	894
1921	2,918	244	3,162	515	502	1,017

(a) Not available.

4. QUEENSLAND

The experience in Queensland following on the discovery of gold was similar to that of New South Wales and Victoria. In 1875 the Government of Queensland notified the Governor of Hong Kong that it proposed to quarantine all vessels coming from China to Cooktown (the port for the Palmer goldfields), and to place disabilities on Chinese at the goldfields. In 1876, by an amendment to the Goldfields Act, the Chinese had to pay heavier licence fees to mine and carry on business than those exacted from white miners and traders. Assent to this measure was at first refused by the Crown, but it became law in 1877. A further amendment in 1878 excluded Chinese for 3 years from any new goldfield unless an Asiatic or an African had discovered it. At the same time, the Chinese were encouraged to return home by the refund of the entrance tax if they left within 3 years, and if during their stay they had not violated the law or been an expense to the State. In 1884, by a further amendment of the law, the capitation fee was raised to £30, and the passenger limitation of ships from 1 to 10 tons to 1 to 50 tons. After the Conference in 1888 Queensland passed a new Act on similar lines to those in force in the Southern Colonies.

The number of Chinese in Queensland at various periods from 1861 to 1921 is shown in the table below.

QUEENSLAND - NUMBER OF CHINESE, 1861 to 1921

YEAR	Full-Blood			Half-Caste		
	Males	Females	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1861	537	1	538	a	a	a
1864	628	...	628	a	a	a
1868	2,621	8	2,629	a	a	a
1881	11,206	23	11,229	a	a	a
1891	8,467	27	8,524	30	20	50
1901	7,637	35	7,672	400	400	800
1911	5,783	212	5,995	355	364	719
1921	3,806	340	4,146	515	442	957

(a) Not available.

5. SOUTH AUSTRALIA

To evade the Victorian Act of 1855 for the restriction of Chinese immigration, the shipping companies landed their Chinese passengers in Guichen Bay, South Australia, whence they travelled overland to the Victorian goldfields. With a view to prevent this, and thereby aid the neighbouring colony in its efforts to check the rapid growth of the Chinese population, South Australia in 1857 passed an Act almost identical with the Act passed by Victoria two years earlier. This Act being considered superfluous was repealed in 1861. After the intercolonial conference in 1880-81, South Australia copied Queensland's Act of 1878, but exempted the Northern Territory from its provisions. In 1888 the restrictive measures were extended to the Northern Territory, and so completed the barrier against the entry of Chinese into Australia.

The following table shows the number of Chinese in South Australia at Census periods from 1881 to 1921.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA - NUMBER OF CHINESE, 1881 to 1921.

YEAR	Full-Blood			Half-Caste		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1881	346a	1a	347	b	b	a
1891	180	2	182	3a	2a	5a
1901	270	17	287	24a	24a	48a
1911	241	14	255	50	54	104
1921	243	8	251	45	71	116

(a) Estimated.

(b) Not available.

6. WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The cessation of transportation and the failure to attract free immigrants of the labouring class led the Government of the then Crown colony of Western Australia to experiment in 1878 with the introduction of 50 Chinese coolies, and it was proposed to bring in 51 others in 1880. Objection to this procedure was taken by the other colonies who unsuccessfully sought the intervention of the Home Government. Meanwhile gold was found in the Kimberley district, and Western Australia fearing inrush of Chinese fell into line with the other colonies by adopting restrictive measures in 1886. Free entry was allowed only to the few Chinese who might come in under the provisions of the Imported Labourers Registry Act of 1884. As a result of the Inter colonial Conference of 1888 an act was passed embodying the restrictive measures agreed upon threat. The Imported Labourers Registry Act, however, made it possible for some Chinese to enter under defined conditions, but, as they continued to drift southwards after their term of indenture in the north had expired, the passenger limitation of 1 to 500 tons was applied in the case of indentured Chinese also. By an amendment passed in 1891 they were not allowed to proceed south of 27° S. Lat.

The number of Chinese in Western Australia in the Census years 1881 to 1921 was as follows:

WESTERN AUSTRALIA - NUMBER OF CHINESE, 1881 to 1921

YEAR	Full-Blood			Half-Caste		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1881	144	1	145	a	a	a
1891	914	3	917	a	a	a
1901	1,503	18	1,521	23	25	48
1911	1,775	37	1,812	33	27	60
1921	1,278	47	1,325	70	48	118

7. TASMANIA

Although at that time the number of Chinese entering Tasmania was small, the colony was represented at the Intercolonial Conference in 1880-81, and agreed to adopt the Queensland

restrictive measure of 1878. No immediate action was taken, however, but in 1885 the development of tin and gold mining attracted Chinese miners despite the fact that they numbered less than a thousand, the usual outcry for protection of white labour arose. In consequence, an Act was passed at the end of 1887 similar to those in force in New South Wales and Victoria, but the additional legislation adopted by the other colonies in 1888 was never enacted in Tasmania.

The number of Chinese in Tasmania at Census periods from 1881 to 1921 is given hereunder.

TASMANIA - NUMBER OF CHINESE, 1881 to 1921

YEAR	Full-Blood			Half-Caste		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1881	842	2	844
1891	931	8	939	62	55	117
1901	482	24	506	54	49	103
1911	400	27	427	50	52	102
1921	247	15	262	36	23	59

8. NORTHERN TERRITORY

In 1874 the South Australian Government introduced 200 Chinese coolies into the Northern Territory to assist in promoting tropical agriculture, while the discovery of gold resulted in many others coming on their own account. The construction of the railway from Darwin to Pine Creek in 1887-88 led to a further increase, and there were at that time upwards of 4,000 Chinese in the Territory. As the result representations made to South Australia by the other colonies, the operation of the Act passed in 1888 to restrict Chinese immigration was extended to the Northern Territory -

The number of Chinese in the Northern Territory at the date of each of the last five Censuses is given hereunder in the following table:

NORTHERN TERRITORY - NUMBER OF CHINESE. 1881 to 1921

YEAR	Full-Blood			Half-Caste		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1881	3,800	4	3,804	a	a	a
1891	3,598	15	3,613	46	45	91
1901	2,962	110	3,072	24b	24b	48b
1911	1,224	107	1,331	4	4	8
1921	609	113	722	5	3	8

(a) Not available.

(b) Estimated.

9. AUSTRALIA

According to the various Censuses taken, the total number of Chinese in Australia never advanced beyond 40,000. It is, of course, possible that this figure was exceeded during an intercensal period, but it is reasonable to suppose that they were never greatly in excess of the number specified. The effect of the restrictive measures adopted by Victoria in 1855, and by New

South Wales in 1861, is shown by the reduced numbers in those States in 1871. The many Chinese who entered Queensland and the Northern Territory during the seventies counteracted the decline in the southern States, and the figure for the whole of Australia in 1881 is probably very near the maximum number at any time. Since 1881 the decline in Australia has been consistent, and as only 2,026 of the 17,157 Chinese recorded in 1921 were born in this country, the decrease is likely to continue.

Up to the last decade of the 19th century the action of the various colonies towards Chinese immigration was directed to avoiding the evils which were supposed to be connected with a large Chinese element in the community; between 1891 and 1901 the feeling evinced gradually developed the "White Australia" policy which excludes all coloured people. On the consummation of federation this policy was expressed in the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1901.

Although particulars relating to Chinese are available for some of the States from earlier dates, information for all States is not available prior to 1881. From that date onward the numbers ascertained from each Census are given in the following table:

AUSTRALIA - NUMBER OF CHINESE, 1881 to 1921

YEAR	Full-Blood			Half-Caste		
	Male	Female	Persons	Male	Female	Persons
1881	38,274	259	38,533	a	a	a
1891	35,523	298	35,821	a	a	a
1901	29,153	474	29,627	1,556	1,534	3,090
1911	21,856	897	22,753	1,518	1,501	3,019
1921	16,011	1,146	17,157b	1,884	1,771	3,655

(a) Not available.

(b) Includes 7 males resident in the Federal Capital Territory.

10. HALF-CASTES

Though many of the Chinese who came to Australia settled here permanently, the fact that so few brought their womenfolk with them indicates that the majority had intended, sooner or later, to return to China. The dearth of women of their own race, however, induced mating with European females where racial animosity could be overcome. According to the Census of 1911, only 801 Chinese were recorded as living with wives. Of the latter, 181 were born in China, 485 in Australia, 63 in England, 15 in Scotland, and 22 in Ireland. Of those born in Australia the majority would probably be of Chinese or mixed descent.

The extent to which Chinese blood has been mixed with the white race is shown by the figures for half-castes in the preceding tables.

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